



Centreville Mill slated for conversion

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WEST WARWICK -- A Lincoln developer plans to convert the 144-year-old Centreville Mill into an apartment complex, the second major mill redevelopment project in town to be announced this month and the third since 2002.

Centreville Mill II LLC bought the 12.7-acre parcel in December in a deal brokered by Robert B. Boyer, chairman of the town's Economic Development Commission.

The company's managing member, Peter Rosiello, outlined details of the \$15-million project yesterday. He said he hopes to build 125 apartments in the mill's six interconnected buildings on Bridal Avenue, along the Pawtuxet River.

"It's an important mill," Rosiello said. "It's ideally suited for a residential conversion."

Each of the buildings is wide enough to accommodate two rows of apartments separated by a central hallway, Rosiello said. Engineers and architects are studying the property, he added, and few design details were available.

Rosiello's announcement followed news that Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse -- the Baltimore-based firm that is redeveloping the long-shuttered Royal Mills on Providence Street -- plans to convert the Crompton Mill into apartments, offices and townhouses.

Rosiello has overhauled a total of 100 apartments at three sites in town since 1996, and he will soon present plans for a Crompton Road condominium project to the Planning Board.

The proposed mill conversion, Rosiello's first, is in its preliminary stages, and Centreville Mill II LLC has not applied for any town permits or submitted drawings to municipal officials, Town Manager Wolfgang Bauer said. Rosiello has given no timeline for construction.

But the project received a big boost on Tuesday, when the National Park Service placed the Centreville Mill on the National Register of Historic Places. That decision will help the company obtain lucrative federal and state tax credits, money it will use to finance construction.

The ruling capped a process the company initiated last December, when it filed an application with the state Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission and sought help from Public Archaeology Laboratory Inc., a Pawtucket firm that employs industrial historians.

The state commission has recommended 29 properties in town for the Register, but few landowners have applied for official status. Before Tuesday, the only mills on the list were Royal Mills, the Lippitt Mill on Main Street and the Valley Queen Mill, operated by the Bradford Soap Co. opposite the Royal Mills complex.

"West Warwick is a terrifically historic town," said Edward Sanderson, the commission's executive director. But, he added, "there's been relatively little activity."

Redevelopment projects are considered critical to preserving the historic structures that line the town's riverbank. Many of the once-thriving mills are now decrepit and vulnerable to vandals.

The 183-year-old Phenix Mill was destroyed by fire before a developer could realize plans to build condominiums, with water views, within its towering stone and concrete walls.

The Centreville Mill's six structures, built between 1861 and 1909, are constructed of rubblestone granite and shale. Inside, the mill buildings feature post-and-beam framing and heavily fortified wood plank floors.

The Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission says the mill produced wool and cotton fabrics, and at one point housed 31,000 spindles, 700 broad looms and 350 employees producing 9 million yards of cloth annually.

Recently, the mill has been used for lace making and light industry.

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